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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes an evaluation of Shared Decision Making (SDM) in Los Angeles (California) schools and also includes some comments about School Based Management (SBM). SDM is a democratization of local school decision making that delegates decisions formerly made by principals to local school leadership councils composed of teachers, parents, and nonteaching school personnel. SBM is a decentralization of decision making that permits teachers, parents, and principals to change local school governance structures and educational strategies. Evaluation information was drawn primarily from interviews at 10 schools. The following findings are presented: (1) the first year of SDM did not generally result in major changes; (2) teacher and parent involvement in the budget process was hampered by the paucity of funds controlled by the local school leadership councils, but discipline was a major focus of attention; (3) the development of collegiality varied widely among councils, the role of the principal in both SDM and SBM was not clearly defined, and parents tended to focus on discussions of discipline but not participate in business matters; (4) some principals have been minimally involved in developing SBM proposals; and (5) some principals have felt pressured to approve SBM proposals. Recommendations emphasize clarifying the role of the principal in both SDM and SBM, training local school leadership council members in substantive areas, and involving the board of education in program oversight. (FMW)

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LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Independent Analysis Unit

SHARED DECISION MAKING - THE FIRST YEAR

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November 5, 1990

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ABSTRACT

This report concerns Shared Decision Making (SDM), a reform designed to improve student achievement. The report is based primarily on interviews conducted at ten LAUSD schools in 1989-90. Its main message is that confusion in 1989-90 about a principal's proper role under Shared Decision Making may have impeded the reform's initial success. Research suggests that an effective school normally requires a strong school principal who mobilizes the school community around a shared vision of how to improve student outcomes. This report urges the District to promote the idea that principals have a leading role in mobilizing teachers and parents to participate in Shared Decision Making. The District should train, evaluate and place principals with an emphasis on their leadership skills. Also impeding the effectiveness of SDM in its first year were: a lack of training for all council members in substantive areas (like student discipline or curriculum), overlapping jurisdictions of school advisory councils, a hostile collective bargaining atmosphere, and a shortage of discretionary funds. For the future, the report urges that LAUSD decentralization proceed for all schools, even those not proposing School Based Management and even in areas where individual School Based Management proposals have not requested greater powers. The report recommends that the Board adopt measures for evaluating the success of schools operating with School Based Management in raising student achievement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes a study of the District's first year of Shared Decision Making (SDM). Our conclusions are based on interviews at ten schools, a review of literature, and a variety of other discussions and observations. While we make some comments about School Based Management (SBM), it is still too early for us to review it fully. None of the ten schools we studied were among the first 27 schools approved for School Based Management.

After only a single year of Shared Decision Making, it is premature to determine whether the innovation has been successful. We have focused in this report on problems for which corrective action might be appropriate, but this focus should not be interpreted to imply that the process is unsuccessful. Both District and UTLA leadership properly anticipated that implementation problems would arise as this reform was introduced.

Shared Decision Making is a *democratization* of local school decision making. Beginning in 1989-90, "local school leadership councils" of teachers, parents and non-teaching school employees make decisions in five areas, previously within principals' realm of authority. Shared Decision Making does not affect the division of responsibility and authority between the school site and the District's regional and central administration.

School Based Management is a *decentralization* of decision making. Beginning in 1990-91, school communities (teachers, parents and school principals) will be permitted to change school governance structures and educational strategies, giving greater authority to the school site vis-a-vis the District's regional and central administration.

Together, these reforms are intended to improve student achievement, harnessing the enthusiasm and creativity of teachers by involving them in decisionmaking. Greater parental support for school changes is also an expected result of participation.

While attention has recently been focused on a small number (38) of schools which have either applied or are expected to apply to participate in School Based Management, the great majority of LAUSD schools will continue to operate under Shared Decision Making rules. Therefore, understanding and, where possible, improving Shared Decision Making will impact the overall performance of schools in LAUSD.

General Observations

The first year of Shared Decision Making did not generally result in major changes at the schools we studied.

Democratization works best when those being empowered receive discretionary resources about which they can make decisions. In LAUSD's budget crisis, loss of discretionary site-based resources has reduced the enthusiasm of leadership council members.

Findings About the Substance of Shared Decision Making

The Board's contract with UTLA defines five broad areas as appropriate for shared decisionmaking: budget, discipline, equipment, scheduling and staff development.

Budget. Teacher and parent involvement has been hampered by a paucity of funds controlled by the local school leadership councils.

Discipline. Discipline was a major focus of attention. Many councils adopted stiffer disciplinary policies, largely reflecting teacher proposals to remove disruptive students from classrooms.

Equipment. Almost all schools have given teachers greater access to copying equipment. Some schools leased or purchased more versatile copying equipment and increased copying paper consumption.

Scheduling. Scheduling was not a major concern in the schools we studied. Councils generally limited their activities to scheduling school events and minimum days.

Staff development. School councils gave only limited attention to staff development. In Chapter I and Bilingual schools, District-sponsored staff development programs continued.

Findings about the Process of Shared Decision Making

Collegiality. Mutual respect and cooperation exist at some schools. At others we observed strong antagonism between teachers and administrators, impeding effective decisionmaking.

Role of the principal. The District and UTLA have not articulated how principals' roles should evolve under Shared Decision Making or School Based Management. Some principals hesitated to take active leadership, expecting it would bring them much criticism and little support.

Parent involvement. When school councils focused on business matters (like copying machine use or supply budgets) many parents felt they had no useful role to play. Parents were interested in discussions of discipline.

Recommendations About Shared Decision Making

There is a need to moderate union-management conflict at the District level. It was unrealistic to expect teachers and administrators at schools to be collegial when public exchanges between UTLA and District leaders were marked by hostility and mistrust. We suggest that the tone of public statements is an appropriate subject for discussions in collective bargaining.

Principals have an important leadership role for which they should be given more support and help. Shared Decision Making does not eliminate but increases the need for a skilled leader at each school. The District should clearly and publicly define the principal's role under Shared Decision Making. Principals should be recognized for the important role they play and given additional training to help them perform their role effectively. District training, evaluation and placement of principals must increasingly emphasize leadership skills as well as management skills.

In recommending a stronger leadership role for principals under Shared Decision Making, we are not advocating a reversal of democratization reforms. Principals can certainly exercise greater leadership within the current Shared Decision Making rules. Also, a strengthened leadership role for principals could be implemented along with a role for teachers in principal selection.

Principals should be active in planning staff development. Staff development should be rooted in each school's needs assessment, reflected in its vision and mission statements. The principal is in the best position to plan such staff development activities, with involvement from teachers.

Council members need more substantive training. Council members need more training on the substantive aspects of decisions for which they are responsible. For example, training in alternative approaches to student discipline would be quite valuable. Since council membership turns over annually, training should be repeated annually.

The district should encourage consolidation of overlapping governance structures. The District, UTLA and the District-wide advisory councils should develop a governance structure which permits a single parent-teacher-administrator committee at each school to carry out both Shared Decision Making and specially funded program supervision. Functions of advisory councils which do not involve programmatic or budgetary decisionmaking -- such as information, parent education, school volunteerism and fund raising -- should be maintained by the advisory councils.

Rules for parent representation should be changed. We recommend that parents elected to school leadership councils not be LAUSD employees at the school which elects them. We support the recent change permitting the election of parent representatives for two year terms.

Findings About School Based Management

Some principals have been minimally involved in developing School Based Management proposals. Because principals are confused about their expected roles and hesitant to assert leadership, School Based Management proposals have been developed mostly by teachers.

Some principals have felt pressured to approve School Based Management proposals. Believing that the District wants School Based Management proposals to demonstrate its commitment to the process, some principals approved applications even though the Board-specified conditions for School Based Management (a common vision of the school's needs, a collegial process in developing the proposal, and involvement of parent/community members) have not been met.

Recommendations About School Based Management

Schools need adequate time to plan for School Based Management. Developing bold and creative educational and governance changes will normally take schools more months than were allotted for preparing the first group of School Based Management plans.

Principals should be more active in developing School Based Management plans. Student outcomes are most likely to improve if the principal articulates a vision of school success and mobilizes other members of the school community to achieve it. Teachers should have leadership roles in planning for School Based Management but principals must not be mere passive spectators in plan development.

Teacher leaders need some paid time to plan for School Based Management. Teachers who are selected to prepare School Based Management proposals should have some paid or released time for planning and meeting with others.

Stability of school leadership is needed for School Based Management. A principal who is involved in planning School Based Management should be able to remain at the school as the plan is implemented.

The waiver process should be used to suggest where District policies can be relaxed for *all* schools. Some additional restrictions can be waived on the Board's own initiative. In policy areas where the District grants waivers for School Based Management, the District (and UTLA) should consider whether all schools should have the same latitude. The Board could also direct the Superintendent to examine central policies which could be waived, even in cases where the idea has not been raised in a School Based Management proposal.

The Board's Future Oversight Role

The District will want to change but not give up its oversight role. The Board of Education has committed to give schools more control over their own destinies. However, there will still be a need for oversight. It is not the existence of oversight but the extent and form of that oversight which is the proper subject for debate and experimentation. As the Board develops experience from its consideration of School Based Management plans, it is developing a clearer idea of those policies which it will insist that all schools follow.

We believe that School Based Management should include a provision for accountability. The District should specify how and when it will determine whether a School Based Management plan has in fact resulted in satisfactory student achievement, and what changes or intervention, if any, are needed to bring up student achievement. To this point, the Board has only dealt with evaluating what schools *plan* to do under School Based Management, not with what these schools actually *accomplish*.

INTRODUCTION

In 1989-90, the District established a "Shared Decision Making" process designed to give teachers and parents a greater voice in school decisions. This reform was proposed by the Superintendent, Leonard Britton, and supported by the teachers' union. Spelled out in the District's contract with UTLA, the process directed that councils of teachers, parents, administrators and other employees be formed at every school. The councils were to be co-chaired by the principal and by the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) chapter chair. Since teachers hold 50% of the seats on each council and some of the remaining seats are held by less vocal and less active groups (classified employees, parents and community representatives), teachers were assured a leading role on the councils.

The "local school leadership councils" were given decision making authority in five areas:

* expenditures from some school budget accounts,
* calendar scheduling,
* use of school equipment,
* student discipline, and
* staff development.

At the same time, the District and UTLA established rules for a broader reform, "School Based Management," in which schools can take increasing responsibility for decisions in all areas.

Shared Decision Making is a *democratization* of local school decision making. Beginning in 1989-90, "Local School Leadership Councils" of teachers, parents and non-teaching school employees make decisions in five areas, previously within principals' realm of authority. Shared Decision Making does not affect the division of responsibility and authority between the school site and the District's regional and central administration.

School Based Management is a *decentralization* of decision making. Beginning in 1990-91, school communities (teachers, parents and school principals) may change school governance structures and educational strategies, giving greater authority to the school site vis-a-vis the District's regional and central administration.

These reforms are expected to improve student achievement in LAUSD for two reasons. First, members of the school community (teachers, parents and school employees) should be more committed to decisions if they participate in making them. And second, the process should lead to better decisions by drawing on the previously underutilized expertise of participants (especially teachers).

In January, 1990 the Board of Education asked the Independent Analysis Unit to begin a multi-year study of Shared Decision Making and School Based Management. This report offers some observations and recommendations based on the first year of Shared Decision Making (1989-90).

We have thus far interviewed principals, teachers, parents and classified employees at ten (10) randomly selected schools. We have observed meetings of leadership councils at some of these schools. We have also gathered information and insight from informal interviews and observations at several schools not in our sample, as well as from District-wide Shared Decision Making conferences and review of relevant literature. None of the schools we studied were among the first 27 schools approved for School Based Management, though some are currently preparing School Based Management proposals.

We begin this report by illustrating the kinds of decisions that have been made in each of the five specified areas. Then we offer some observations about the process of Shared Decision Making in 1989-90. We make several recommendations for improving this process. Finally, we offer some reflections on issues raised by the transition to School Based Management in 1990-91 and beyond.

After only a single year of Shared Decision Making, it is premature to determine whether the innovation has been successful. We have focused in this report on problems for which corrective action might be appropriate, but this focus should not be interpreted to imply that the problems are insurmountable or that the process is unsuccessful either in the schools we studied or in LAUSD as a whole. Both District and UTLA leadership properly anticipated that implementation problems would arise as this reform was introduced.

SHARED DECISION MAKING EXPERIENCE IN THE FIVE AREAS

Under Shared Decision Making, local school leadership councils have responsibility for decisions in five areas: budgets, calendar, equipment, discipline and staff development. School principals previously had authority in these areas, although many principals consulted with teacher committees before making decisions. Following is a review of the kinds of decisions which were made in these five areas in the schools we studied in 1989-90.

Budget Decisions

Types of Decisions. In 1989-90, school councils were given control over the following school funds: instructional material, lottery, state textbook, school-determined needs, year round school incentive discretionary funds, and student integration program discretionary funds. School councils did not exercise control over categorical program budgets such as bilingual/ESL funds, Chapter 1 and other funds for low-achieving students, and School Improvement funds. In general, the funds which leadership councils controlled were small compared to those they did not control. Approximately 20% (on average) of all local school discretionary resources were under the control of local school leadership councils in 1989-90.[1]

Most of these "discretionary" resources, however, are used for expenditures about which councils have little practical flexibility. Basic school supplies (paper, crayons, pencils) must be purchased by all schools, regardless of their councils' particular philosophies. The most flexible of the discretionary accounts was lottery funds. Schools have, in recent years, used lottery funds for creative programs like field trips, "The Performing Tree," a poet-in-residence program, etc. Because of the District's budget crisis, the Board reduced school lottery accounts from $13.20 to $5 per pupil in January, 1990. While the reduction amounted to only a 10% cut in leadership councils' total discretionary resources, the impact of this cut was greater because it restricted those expenditures about which leadership councils were most concerned.

In one school we studied, the principal had previously allocated $200 of lottery money to each classroom teacher, to be spent at his/her discretion. The council reversed this decision, and allocated the money instead for xerox paper. However, before the money could be spent, the Board cut the lottery account.

In another school we studied, the Shared Decision Making council overruled a principal's attempt to order advanced math textbooks for students who completed the textbook for the highest grade in the school. Instead, the council supported a proposal by teachers to spend this money for reading workbooks, not favored by the principal.

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1 All schools receive the same per pupil amount of money in accounts like lottery and instructional material. However, this amount represents a higher proportion of total funds in English speaking non-Chapter I schools.

In some schools where the principal previously had a practice of consulting teachers about budgetary decisions, the decisionmaking process was not substantially different from past practice. In some cases, the principal presented the entire budget (including funds outside the jurisdiction of the council) to a faculty meeting for approval; in other schools, there were established procedures for allocating proportions of funds to departments or for teacher committees making decisions about supplies. These procedures continued.

Discussion. The bulk of discretionary dollars at many schools are categorical and not within the councils' purview. In Chapter I schools in particular, budgets of greater importance are within the jurisdiction of the Advisory Council, not the school leadership council. Those budgets which are within the councils' jurisdiction were cut during 1989-90 and have been cut further in 1990-91.

Recognition of the limited scope of Shared Decision Making authority has embittered some teachers, especially when a few principals used their expertise in school budgeting to manipulate decisions by channeling them from one jurisdiction to another.

The muitiplicity of councils and consultative bodies, each with different balances of constituent groups and with different (but overlapping) jurisdictions has unnecessarily complicated the task of involving parents and teachers in school governance. The juggling of various council meetings has placed unreasonable demands on principals,' teachers,' and parents' schedules and made decisionmaking more bureaucratic than it need be.[2]

Recommendation. The District, UTLA and the District-wide advisory councils should develop a governance structure which permits a single parent-teacher-administrator committee at each school to carry out both Shared Decision Making and specially funded program supervision. Functions of advisory councils which do not involve programmatic or budgetary decision-making -- such as information, parent education, school volunteerism and fund raising -- should be maintained by the advisory councils.

Scheduling Decisions

Types of Decisions. In 1989-90, school leadership councils used their authority over scheduling mainly to make non-controversial decisions such as scheduling school events and minimum days. For example, one council postponed the celebration of Cinco de Mayo for one week to permit the faculty members coordinating it greater time to make the necessary arrangements. Many principals continued to develop a school events calendar and then present it to a faculty meeting for concurrence.[3]

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2 Several of the 27 schools whose School Based Management Plans were approved in August proposed consolidation of at least some of these councils. Specific school plans varied both as to which councils were consolidated and as to the membership of the consolidated council. We do not yet have information as to whether, or how, these plans were actually implemented.

3 Councils' scheduling authority could become more controversial should UTLA prevail in a pending arbitration. In essence, the union's claim is that the councils' scheduling authority extends to whether events should be scheduled at all, not merely to when events decided upon by the principal should be scheduled.

We encountered two examples where there were differences of opinion. One council changed the school's "open house night" to a daytime parent visitation program. Another council adopted a staggered lunch period to comply with Board policy that each child has at least 20 minutes to eat after going through the lunch line.

Discussion. Leadership councils' discussions of schedule changes sometimes involved choices between the interests of different individuals or groups. For example, teachers in one of our sample schools wanted to schedule "open house" during school hours in part because it was inconvenient to return to campus in the evening. They justified the change by citing the small number of parents who attended. The principal opposed the change, believing that an evening open house was in the best interests of parents. Though few parents attended open house in the evening, working parents who did so may be inconvenienced by the change.

In the case of the staggered lunch hour change, a common lunch period for teachers had to be sacrificed. Teacher representatives on the council went along with this change only because Board policy and student transportation constraints (which made lengthening the school day impossible) left no other alternatives.

There is a potential for minor conflict over calendar decisions because other school constituent groups also play a role in setting the calendar. For example, in some schools the PTA and Chapter I Advisory Council have traditionally decided on their own meeting schedules, which have consequences for open house night and other parent-school activities. In some schools, the Chapter I or Bilingual advisory councils have in the past made decisions about scheduling Cinco de Mayo or Martin Luther King Birthday celebrations. For these reasons as well, a merger of the various school councils would be advisable.

Decisions About Equipment

Types of Decisions. Some school councils spent a lot of time discussing access to copying machines. In all schools we studied, leadership councils gave teachers direct access to copying machines, without having to submit material for copying to an office clerk. In some schools whose machine leases came due in 1989-90, leadership councils decided on upgraded equipment. Some councils adopted tentative policies giving teachers a monthly limit on copies which could be made, with a plan to review these policies at a later date when cost experience becomes available.

Discussion. Acknowledging the symbolism of this issue, most principals wisely restrained their inclinations to limit the expansion of access to copying machines which teachers sought.

Some principals were concerned about the budgetary consequences of increased copying machine use. However, most principals agreed to new policies, anticipating that few teachers would actually use copying machines to the extent permitted by the new policies, or believing that dealing with budgetary consequences later would be a more effective way of educating teachers than fighting the issue now.

Disputes about copying machine use also had a pedagogical side. A few principals argued that easy access to copying machines would encourage teachers to rely on multiple choice, rote and drills, rather than on more creative teaching, problem solving, hands-on or "higher order" skills.[4] But if these principals are correct, they need to develop more effective ways of transmitting creative teaching skills to their staffs than resistance to copying machine use. It may be that the District also needs to strengthen the training of some principals in this area.

Decisions About Discipline

Types of Decisions. Most of the schools we studied spent a lot of time on discipline and adopted stricter disciplinary policies.

For example, several school leadership councils established detention rooms (during school, after school, or on Saturdays) to which misbehaving students could be sent; and/or adopted more rigid disciplinary codes in which consequential punishment (like suspension) more certainly follows a set number of offenses, irrespective of the reasons for misbehavior. Thus, principals' prior practices of using their discretion in meting out punishment was restricted.

One elementary school adopted a policy requiring children to line up in the yard and then file into classrooms in an orderly fashion, replacing a less formal system where teachers opened their classrooms before the beginning of the school day and children came in as they arrived at school. A secondary school adopted a policy of "tardy sweeps," locking classroom doors at the bell and detaining students who are not present.

Discussion. Discipline is a policy area in which principals and teachers frequently disagreed. Teachers and principals in general concur that serious discipline problems should be handled out of the classroom by administrators while less serious problems should be handled in the classroom by teachers attempting to address the underlying causes of misbehavior. But there is a wide gap between teachers and principals regarding where the line between serious and less serious problems should be drawn.

Generally, teachers want misbehaving students removed from the classroom so that teaching is not disrupted, and parents of other students agree.[5] Principals, on the other hand, generally want teachers to handle most disciplinary problems in class. In some cases, emphasis on in-class discipline has been combined with attempts by principals to de-emphasize punitive discipline, seeking instead to have teachers address underlying causes of behavior problems

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4 We have no independent evidence that this has or has not happened; copying machines could also be used to reproduce teacher generated materials of high quality.

5 In some schools we surveyed, parents who remained active on school leadership councils tended to be parents of higher achieving students. These parents felt that their children's education was being disrupted by disciplinary problem children who remained in the classroom. One principal we interviewed insisted that these particular children were high achievers in large part because of the high degree of interest and participation of their parents at the school.

and to focus on improving students' self-concepts.[6] Where students are sent out of the classroom, these principals want to retain the flexibility, on a case-by-case basis, to counsel rather than punish.

Many teachers in these schools, on the other hand, are frustrated and angered by what they perceive to be a lack of interest on the part of principals in teachers' desires for an orderly classroom in which effective teaching can take place without disruption. These teachers summarize their principals' attitudes toward discipline as "out of sight, out of mind."

In short, several principals with whom we spoke see teachers as not wanting to deal with behavioral problems and their affective causes, and as being too willing to send problem kids out of the classroom. Several teachers see principals as not wanting to be bothered by behavioral problems, being too willing to sacrifice education by forcing teachers to keep unruly kids in the classroom.

These principals have not succeeded in persuading teachers that most discipline problems should be handled in the classroom; and teachers' resentment over lack of administrative support in disciplinary matters has made discipline a priority for school leadership councils.

If schools are to have disciplinary policies which aim to prevent misbehavior, and to counsel misbehaving students rather than punish them, then a variety of extra resources may be needed. For example, principals who advocate this approach must develop more effective training programs for teachers in this regard -- or the District or Regions must develop such programs for the principals. It takes fewer staff members to supervise a detention room with thirty children than to conduct thirty counseling sessions, plus discussions with each misbehaving child's parent and classroom teacher. A teacher's ability to give an individual child the attention which might prevent misbehavior decreases as class size increases.

Since the District's budget crisis continues to preclude class size reduction while also requiring reduction in support positions (deans, counselors and assistant principals), school councils may continue expanding the role of suspension, detention rooms and other punitive forms of discipline. As things stand now, the non-punitive approach to discipline has little credibility among teachers.

Decisions About Staff Development

Types of Decisions. Leadership councils did not spend a lot of time planning staff development. The District or Regions, not local leadership councils, continued to organize most staff development activities in 1989-90. Training in the implementation of the Bilingual Master Plan is an example of such District controlled training. In other cases, Regions have scheduled staff development on the State curricular frameworks.

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6 Caught in the Middle, for example, recommends such an approach.

Perhaps because many curricular matters are already covered by such programs, teachers on the leadership councils proposed training sessions on issues like gang activity, drug abuse, the year-round school calendar, new disciplinary approaches (like conflict resolution training), etc. Staff development decisions in the hands of the school leadership councils has also, in some cases, resulted in a teacher survey determining staff development agendas, with subjects being chosen in order of the votes each receives.

Inhibiting a vigorous staff development program at the local school has been the continuing dissatisfaction of teachers at many schools about whether they receive additional pay if a staff development meeting lasts beyond their normal departure time at the end of the school day and, if so, at what rate (the teacher's own "hourly" rate or the considerably lower "prof expert" rate). To the extent there were disagreements in 1989-90 about staff development, they involved the scheduling of such sessions, not content.

Discussion. We are concerned that Shared Decision Making is fragmenting staff development in some schools. Where staff development is the result of a poll, topics receiving a large number of votes may not sequentially build on other topics covered previously.

We are not convinced that responsibility for staff development should be assigned exclusively to local school leadership councils. While teachers should be consulted with regard to areas in which they want training, it is dubious educational practice to leave the entire decision on training curricula to those being trained. Teachers cannot always be expected to request training in areas with which they are not yet familiar, nor can they be expected to appreciate the sequential requirements of a curriculum they have not yet been taught.

We believe a teacher training program should be firmly grounded in the particular school's mission statement, based on identification of specific problems and goals, including an analysis of that school's achievement scores, curricular strengths and weaknesses, and student success rates. Perhaps school leadership councils should be charged with responsibility for developing a school mission statement.[7] The principal or a designated staff group could work, with input from teachers, to develop a proposed staff development program which supports this mission statement; and then could submit this program to the leadership council for approval. In the absence of such an integrated approach, staff development is not likely to be effective.

Recommendation. Since the District and UTLA properly believe that a coherent and articulated program of staff development is important to the professional growth and pedagogical effectiveness of teachers, then a different approach may be called for. Staff development should be rooted in each school's needs, as identified by its vision and mission statements. The principal is probably in the best position to plan such staff development activities, with involvement from teachers and the approval of the school's leadership council.

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7 At present, schools proposing School Based Management must develop such a statement. Schools in the School Improvement Program have also been required to develop such a mission statement. Our experience in the schools we surveyed leads us to believe that in many schools these statements are quickly forgotten. Therefore, we believe no harm would be done by expecting the school leadership council to repeat this process or, at the very least, review the mission statement developed for the School Improvement Program. Note that this is another example where different councils (School Improvement and School Leadership) have overlapping functions.

THE PROCESS OF SHARED DECISION MAKING

Collegiality, Conflict, and the Role of the Principal

Shared Decision Making should be a collegial process in which the parties seek consensus on issues of mutual concern. Collegiality does not mean the absence of disagreement or conflict. It does mean that there is mutual respect between the principal and faculty (as well as among the faculty), including a willingness to compromise or give fair trial to ideas of others. Shared Decision Making should also include mutual respect between a school's professional staff, parents and classified employees. In fact, the absence of disagreement or conflict at a school may be a sign of the lack of collegiality: that is, council members may be unwilling to engage in open exploration of ideas or approaches about which they may differ.

Antagonism Between Principals and UTLA Chapters

We observed a lack of collegiality between teachers and principals at many of the schools in our sample. At only two of the schools in our sample could the relationship between UTLA and the principal be called "collegial;" at one, there was considerable disagreement between the principal and UTLA chapter chair on many issues, but neither was intimidated and there was a willingness to try to understand the other's position. In several interviews, the chapter chair remarked that, while he disagreed with the principal's approach to an issue, if the chapter chair were in the principal's shoes, he might view the problem as the principal now does.

At many schools, the atmosphere in 89-90, the year following the strike, would be more correctly described as antagonistic. The antagonism towards principals expressed by almost all Chapter Chairs with whom we spoke nearly a year after the 1989 strike was remarkable in its vehemence. It was inconsistent with expectations of collegial governance of school sites. The most notable exception to this pattern was a case where the principal had served refreshments to teachers on the strike picket line.

Some chapter chairs expressed their enmity by refusing to use the term "principal" to describe the school's leader, instead referring to him/her only as the "administrator," a way of suggesting that the position has no instructional or leadership role and is only a bureaucratic assignment separate from educational concerns.

In many schools, the ongoing conflict between UTLA chapters and the principal is reflected in teachers' organized refusals to perform duties which are not specifically required by the UTLA-LAUSD contract. For example, teachers at several schools refused the principal's instruction to record grades (or comments) on interim report cards to parents. At another, teachers refused to initial a distribution list for the principal's "daily bulletin". At another, teachers refused to meet with parents after class except on minimum days.

Teachers' antagonism toward the District was reinforced by the way in which these teachers understood the accomplishments of the 1989 teacher strike. Without exception, teachers we interviewed mischaracterized the District's pre-strike salary offer; for example, one Chapter Chair we interviewed insisted that, immediately prior to the strike, the District was offering only a 3.2% first-year wage increase to teachers, not 8%. Other Chapter Chairs had similar misconceptions.

We found a widespread belief among teachers that Shared Decision Making and School Based Management was entirely a teacher union initiative on behalf of teacher professionalization and that a strike became necessary in order to extract this concession from District negotiators whose goal was to preserve as much administrative power as possible. We found no awareness among teachers that Superintendent Britton was strongly identified with SDM/SBM, that some form of this program was supported by each party in collective bargaining, and that the pre-strike differences on this issue were relatively narrow.

In District-wide meetings we attended, we found that the tone of District leaders' remarks, not only those of UTLA leaders, reinforced these assumptions. In meetings and training programs for teachers, we have heard District leaders describe their own genuine support for School Based Management in a self-deprecating fashion, graciously giving union leadership full credit for the reform itself and for any progress recorded thus far in its implementation.[8]

The District also lost credibility with Shared Decision Making participants when the Board voted last year to recapture lottery funds which had been assigned to schools. Lottery funds were an important portion of the councils' discretionary money. Teachers interpreted the decision to reduce schools' lottery accounts as confirmation of a District plan to sabotage Shared Decision Making and School Based Management, and proof that there was no serious interest on the Board's part in promoting these reforms.

Principals' Demoralization and Withdrawal from Leadership

Some principals, feeling threatened by Shared Decision Making, are hostile to the reform. Principals frequently complained that they were not consulted about the District's decision to initiate Shared Decision Making. Yet, they feel, they remain accountable for their schools' performance while losing the authority to implement programs to improve that performance.

Several principals we interviewed insisted that, in any conflict with a UTLA Chapter Chair, a principal cannot expect to be supported by higher authorities in the District. Thus, some principals may be sitting back and not exerting leadership which is still their responsibility, waiting to see how far higher authorities in the District are prepared to let teacher authority expand.

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8 In several meetings we observed, District leaders did not challenge sarcastic remarks by UTLA leaders, the effect of which were to minimize the District's commitment to Shared Decision Making. All was done in good humor, and District leaders' intent, no doubt, was to avoid unnecessary confrontations in meetings which were generally cooperative. While promotion of cordial relations with UTLA leadership is definitely an important objective, District leaders also need to send a consistent and public message to their own middle managers (principals) that Shared Decision Making is *their* reform, a reform in which they should take pride and leadership. Sending such a message may, in such situations, conflict with the goal of cordiality, and a price is paid for sacrificing the message. For example, at several conferences we observed, District Administrators made positive suggestions to facilitate the implementation of Shared Decision Making and School Based Management. UTLA leaders expressed mock amazement that so helpful a contribution could be made by an administrator, implying that administrators would normally be expected to impede, not assist, decentralization. District officials amicably joined in the laughter following the UTLA leader's comments. The effect of this unchallenged joke was to reinforce in the audience (mostly teachers and principals) the expectation that administrators will normally resist Shared Decision Making.

In some schools we surveyed, however, principals took the opposite tack: making decisions in areas reserved for the leadership council (like planning staff development, planning holiday celebrations or ordering textbooks) but for which the leadership council had not yet scheduled agenda time to discuss. In some cases, such unilateral decisions were reversed by the council or as a result of a UTLA grievance, but in most cases the principals' decisions in these areas were unchallenged.

An example of some principals' withdrawal from leadership is that some principals apparently "signed off" on their schools' applications to be among the first 70 schools participating in School Based Management, despite a conviction on the part of these principals that the applications were inappropriate -- either because the collegial governance which School Based Management requires is not yet possible at the school, or because the teachers advocating School Based Management had not developed a vision or mission statement which went beyond cliches, or because the authors had not thought through the changes they wished to make at the local school site.

Some principals we interviewed were pressured by teachers to expand the jurisdiction of the school leadership councils beyond the five areas specified in the UTLA contract. When teacher representatives demanded the right to review principals' decisions in other areas (for example, expenditure decisions for categorical funds), these principals felt that, should they refuse, they would be considered "obstructionist" by their administrative superiors. This problem was compounded by the fact that District and Regional administrators did not always express a consistent point of view on this subject: principals sometimes received conflicting advice from higher level administrators on how far beyond the five areas they should allow the school leadership councils to go.

All principals, even those who are not perceived by their staffs to be collegial, make attempts to consult teachers about important decisions. Some principals are, by experience, maturity, personality, and style, more self-confident and effective in collegial governance; the effective leaders are able to communicate to teachers a true sense of shared mission. Typically, these principals successfully involved teachers in important school decisions before Shared Decision Making came to the school.

Collegiality and Adversarial Collective Bargaining

In the year of the strike, teacher union leaders were vocal critics of the District's financial reporting, administrative efficiency and integrity. This public criticism continued through most of 1989-90 and had the effect of seriously discrediting (in the minds of many teachers) all persons in administrative positions, including principals.

Allegations of District budgeting dishonesty have been particularly influential. Several teachers with whom we spoke had little doubt that the District was hiding excessive balances which could be used to fund further teacher salary increases and educational improvements. Last spring's budget cuts were characterized by these teachers, consistent with the pronouncements of teacher union leaders, either as a cynical political move to scare UTLA prior to contract bargaining, or as an attempt to sacrifice educational programs in order to preserve the privileges of a useless and parasitic administrative stratum.

When teachers believe that the District leadership habitually hides money to prevent its use for teacher salaries or educational improvements, these teachers are also likely to assume that principals are hiding school based funds in order to prevent school leadership councils from making appropriate expenditure decisions. We do not believe it is possible to maintain a public atmosphere of mistrust between the UTLA President and the Superintendent or Chief Business and Financial Officer, while expecting teachers and principals to operate schools in an atmosphere of collegiality, consensus and trust.[9]

If a collegial atmosphere and Shared Decision Making are to be successful at the school site level, the central District and UTLA leadership must project an attitude of greater mutual trust. They must publicly express less divergent versions of recent District history (for example, the collective bargaining which led to the 1989 strike) and less vituperative analyses of their legitimate differences over issues like the current budget or the upcoming contract bargaining.

It is traditional in collective bargaining that top management and union leaders express great public antagonism while remaining able to maintain a respectful and more businesslike relationship in private bargaining sessions. This tradition, however, is dysfunctional in a case like LAUSD today, where *local* managers (principals) and union leaders (chapter chairs) are expected to arrive at consensus decisions in a non-adversarial atmosphere.

We noted above that, in an effort to avoid conflict or even to improve relations with UTLA, District leaders have not taken credit for the District's role in promoting Shared Decision Making and School Based Management and have not objected when UTLA leaders have made public statements that imply administration resistance to these reforms. While understating the District's role may promote more cordial relationships with teacher union leaders, we think District administrators underestimate the extent to which such one-sided presentations undermine the mutual respect and collegiality which is necessary for the success of Shared Decision Making at a school site level. A failure of District leaders to take greater public credit for the transition to Shared Decision Making and School Based Management helps to foster an atmosphere where teachers, and UTLA Chapter Chairs in particular, believe that Shared Decision Making and School Based Management are antagonistic processes in which teachers must scheme to wrest power from hostile principals.

Recommendations. District leaders should express pride in their own promotion of Shared Decision Making and School Based Management, and avoid public stances implying that support for these reforms is only a reluctant acceptance of teacher union initiatives.

There is a need to moderate union-management conflict at the District level. It is unrealistic to expect teachers and administrators at schools to be collegial while public exchanges between UTLA and District leaders are marked by hostility and mistrust. District and UTLA leaders must model positive working relationships in their public remarks if they expect such relationships to develop and flourish at schools.

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9 It is a common pattern in industrial relations: when an antagonistic atmosphere is publicized between the top leadership of a corporation and its union, workers' hostility about corporate policy is often directed at the workers' immediate supervisor or foreman, not the corporate leadership.

The tone of the UTLA leadership is not totally beyond the influence of District negotiators. In collective bargaining, tone itself is an appropriate subject for discusssion; if Shared Decision Making is to succeed, the Board should insist that District personnel responsible for collective bargaining make the public tone of discussions about budget and other District policies a subject for current negotiation.[10]

Articulating a Positive Role for Principals

Principals' self-confidence may be undermined by the failure of District leadership to include in their Shared Decision Making and School Based Management models a coherent description of the proper role of a principal in a successful school. There is significant difference between a principal who, as faculty leader, consults, involves, inspires, teaches and motivates teachers; and one who is an administrative secretary to a school council, with no role beyond carrying out policies adopted by the council. Some principals feel that the latter role definition is implicit in Shared Decision Making.

In allowing its principals' morale to be undermined, the District runs the risk of a self-fulfilling prophecy: principals who are afraid to lead will encourage further condemnation of their uselessness. One step the Board could take is to encourage School Based Management proposals where the governance structure includes a principal's veto.

Principals should be given greater recognition for the important role they play and continued training to help them perform this role effectively. Strengthening principals' leadership role may become even more necessary if Shared Decision Making expands beyond the original five areas of decisionmaking (or even if the five areas become more meaningful; for example, if significant discretionary budgets become available). A leadership council with responsibility for a broad range of school activities (including instruction) could not function without a strong principal to carry out the general policy mandates of the council. The alternative would be to let the council get bogged down in administrative detail.

Recommendation. We believe that the District's educational philosophy should include a role for principals as instructional, social and disciplinary leaders of schools, and not a role ultimately defined only as secretary to a teachers' committee. If the Board agrees, it needs to articulate and defend this philosophy to UTLA, to the public and to principals themselves. In recommending a strengthened and more openly recognized leadership role for principals under Shared Decision Making, we are not advocating a reversal of democratization reforms. Strong leadership and democracy are not antithetical. For example, a strengthened leadership role for principals could be implemented along with a role for teachers in the screening of candidates for principal and in principal selection and evaluation.

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10 The observations and interviews on which this report is based took place prior to recent changes of leadership in both the District and UTLA. The presence of new leadership offers the possibility of a more positive relationship than existed previously. However, since 90-91 is a bargaining year, we believe it will take special efforts to avoid rekindling the hostilities of the recent past which had such disruptive effects on relationships at the local school sites.

But some principals may be unprepared to play the leadership role which is required under Shared Decision Making and School Based Management, even if the Board makes clear that it expects them to do so. Leadership, as opposed to management ability, should play a greater role in the selection and evaluation of principals as Shared Decision Making evolves.[11] Principals who are having difficulty in this more complex role may need a different assignment. The District's training programs for both prospective and current principals should be re-examined to insure that leadership skill development is given the highest priority.

Time Demands on Teachers

Teacher enthusiasm for participation in Shared Decision Making has waned at some schools as teachers have realized that meaningful participation requires substantial time commitments for which there is no extra compensation. As a result, at some schools we studied, fewer teachers ran for election to school leadership councils in the second year than in the first.

We suspect that many teachers approached the administrative tasks of Shared Decision Making with the expectation that such tasks (like ordering textbooks or keeping track of budgets) would be easy, since there is a public perception that LAUSD administrators draw excessive salaries for doing little useful work. Upon finding that these administrative tasks were complex and time-consuming, some teachers became disillusioned and embittered with the Shared Decision Making process. Others concluded that bureaucratic restrictions (for example, rigid definitions of the types of expenditures permitted from specific appropriation accounts) were intended to frustrate teacher empowerment.

Some principals, reacting to teachers' contempt for administrative tasks, too willingly agreed to turn over administrative tasks to teacher (i.e., school leadership council) committees which demanded them. These principals knew that the administrative work was more onerous than the teachers expected and that being responsible for administration would discourage rather than empower the teachers who undertook such tasks. Such principals gave the teachers less administrative assistance than they might have done had they wanted the teachers to succeed.

Shared Decision Making at present makes no allowance for releasing teachers from other duties if, at the behest of a leadership council, they assume greater administrative responsibility. And teacher professionalization in LAUSD does not always include a commitment on the part of professional teachers to commit time to non-classroom responsibilities without additional hourly compensation.

The UTLA contract permits one of a school's two monthly leadership council meetings to be held during regular school hours (during a common preparation period for secondary teachers or during the morning pre-class preparation period for elementary teachers). Since this allows

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11 "[There is a] distinction between leadership skills involving persuasion, setting goals and developing community consensus behind them, and managerial and supervisory skills. Although the latter are necessary, we believe that school boards must consciously develop leadership skills at the school and district levels if the reforms we propose are to be achieved." **A Nation at Risk**, The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983.

meetings of only one half-hour at an elementary school and only fifty minutes at a secondary school, it remains necessary for the other monthly meeting to be held after school or in the evening, when there is time for a fuller agenda.

In most schools, subcommittees of the leadership council were established in each (or most) of the five agenda areas. Teachers arranged their meetings of these subcommittees as their schedules permitted, again without paid released time.

At some schools, teachers are dissatisfied that school leadership councils do not all meet during teaching time (with teacher representatives released from classroom duties by paid substitutes) or with additional pay in non-teaching time.

However, we think the present arrangement is appropriate, and do not recommend additional paid meeting time for teachers on local school leadership councils. We think a few hours of meetings after school, over lunch, or during preparation periods each month is within the scope of teachers' professional duties.[12] To the extent participation in a local school leadership council requires more than a reasonable amount of time, it may be because the council is getting mired in administrative work, not school policy. This should be avoided. It remains the responsibility of the principal and his/her administrative staff to carry out policies adopted by the school leadership councils.

Parent Representation on Councils

We do not have a lot of information at the present time about parent involvement in leadership councils, although we have interviewed parents and plan to examine this in greater detail at a later stage of our study. We do note, however, that in several schools we studied, parents elected to the school leadership council were persons already employed by the school as teacher assistants, campus or classroom aides, cafeteria workers or other classified employees. While these parents may have a more thorough understanding of school problems than parents who are not school employees, some dangers are apparent in this overlapping role. For example, the perspective of parents who are employees may be different from most parents on the issue of yard discipline, especially if the parent-employees are responsible for yard supervision.[13]

We also found that many parents elected to the school leadership councils dropped out after attending only a few meetings. While translation was provided, it proved more difficult to provide simultaneous translation for the give-and-take of a small decisionmaking group than to provide the translation usually available, for example, at a school advisory council meeting where a single speaker's remarks (usually those of the principal) are interpreted. In addition to frustration with translation, some parents dropped out because of impatience at what they perceived to be incessant bickering between teachers and principals; others dropped out

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12 In a later section of this report, we do recommend that teachers who have major responsibility for developing a School Based Management plan should be allocated paid time necessary to fulfill this responsibility. This assignment, however, is not within the normal charge of teachers on a school leadership council.

13 We do not imply that a parent perspective is necessarily more "correct" than a parent-employee perspective, but only that, in such a case, the parent perspective is under-represented.

because meeting schedules conflicted with their jobs; and others because, except for discussions about discipline, many of the subjects covered in the leadership councils (like supply budgets, equipment use, placement of "minimum days" on a calendar) seemed technical and unrelated to parent concerns. In the case of budgets in particular, it took a full year of participation for some parents to begin to familiarize themselves with the program acronyms and appropriation numbers around which such discussions revolve.

Recommendation. We recommend that the parent representatives on school leadership councils not be employees of the school at which they are elected. In order for parents to become familiar with program acronyms, appropriation numbers and other common denominators of school administrative discourse, it would also be wise for schools to elect parents to school leadership councils for two year terms. (A recent side letter to the UTLA contract permits two year terms.) We also recommend that the District prepare and distribute a multi-lingual and easily understood glossary of school program and budget terms.

Training Programs for Shared Decision Making

The District-UTLA training programs for participants in Shared Decision Making had mixed success. Training sessions in school based budgeting were highly regarded. Others were not.

Budgetary training sessions were successful because they imparted specific knowledge and skills. Other training sessions contained information about procedural rights of Shared Decision Making councils, or practice in reaching consensus, but not substantive information about the decisionmaking areas within the councils' jurisdiction.

Workshops sponsored by UTLA and the District at USC on May 18 and 19 were a small step in an appropriate direction. But only council members from the 70 schools considered for School Based Management in 1990-91 were invited, and relatively few of those attended.

Recommendation. Council members need more training in the substantive aspects of all decisions for which they are responsible. As a few examples, all school leadership council members -- administrators, teachers, parents and classified staff -- should be trained in

- theories of student discipline: effective disciplinary programs and techniques, child development, socio-economic factors affecting behavior, classroom strategies which prevent misbehavior, etc.;
- programs and techniques for increasing parental involvement;
- principles of the State curriculum frameworks and other comprehensive approaches to curriculum, so that informed decisions can be made about the expenditure of textbook funds.

Since there is turnover in the composition of councils, training programs need to be consistent and repeated. Even council members who have completed the District's training programs could benefit from refresher courses.

Since most schools are expected eventually to develop a School Based Management proposal which is predicated on a needs assessment leading to a strategy for improving student academic achievement, all local school leadership councils need guidance in what the detailed content of that statement and its corollaries should be: what the near-, mid- and long-term goals of an urban school should be, and what the best wisdom available says are specific steps which should be taken to achieve them.

For middle schools, councils thinking about School Based Management should be given substantive training in teaming and unifying the social studies, language arts and science curricula. Planning groups need detailed guidance in how to manipulate a school's master schedule to implement a core approach. They need instruction in the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a "seven period day." The Office of Instruction has recently inaugurated such a training program, available to middle school teams planning a transition to School Based Management.

Shared Decision Making and LAUSD's Budget Crisis

An assumption behind Shared Decision Making and School Based Management is that school performance will improve as the teachers who are responsible for education at a site become more involved in decisionmaking at that site. Those who participate in decisions have a greater personal stake in seeing those decisions succeed and will work harder to make them succeed. While we share this assumption, the present tight fiscal climate for schools in California makes the democratization of decisionmaking more difficult. Democratization works best when those being empowered actually have discretionary resources about which they can make decisions. In LAUSD's budget crisis, discretionary site based resources have been greatly reduced. Ironically, Shared Decision Making is being implemented when there is much less to share decisionmaking about. For example, schools received lottery and Instructional Materiel Account funds in 1989-90; but lottery funds were frozen in that year and then eliminated entirely in 1990-91.

The Board, UTLA and parent groups all agreed that the purpose of a transition to Shared Decision Making and School Based Management is to improve student achievement. It will not be possible to determine whether School Based Management is capable of this accomplishment, however, if the underlying funding of LAUSD schools is deteriorating at the very time these reforms are being implemented. The experiment may not get a "fair trial" because it is being attempted while resources are being cut.

THE TRANSITION TO SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT

In 1989-90, we observed the first year of Shared Decision Making. In 1990-91, some schools are striving to make a transition to School Based Management, and others may make similar transitions in the near future. We wish to call the Board's attention to several issues raised by this transition to School Based Management.

Time Lines for Proposing School-Based Management

The Central Council initially proposed to the Board a June deadline for 70 schools to submit applications for participation in the first semester of School Based Management. Central Council members apparently believed that a limit of 70 would be necessary to prevent the Council and Board from being inundated with applications. However, in fact few schools were prepared to participate in School Based Management at that time. When it soon became obvious that few applications would be submitted, the number 70 became a goal rather than a limit, and District, Region and Union leaders began to pressure schools to submit premature applications.

District and Union leaders tried to overcome schools' resistance to submitting premature applications by assuring the schools that, even if they did know what specific educational or governance changes they wished to make, assistance and training in developing specific proposals would be offered to schools that applied. The USC training on May 18-19, while a good start, was inadequate to fulfill this promise.

Some principals felt that higher level administrators wanted applications submitted for School Based Management, irrespective of content, because such applications would silence critics who claimed that the District (or principals) didn't want to participate in School Based Management. Thus, some schools submitted applications for School Based Management even though required conditions for participation (a shared vision, collegial working relationships) had not truly been met. In one school, for example, the principal signed an application to participate in School Based Management, despite the fact that the council's sole object in applying was to overturn the principal's policies for assigning teachers to classes.

Recognizing that the June 1990 deadline (for 70 schools to submit school restructuring plans) was too short, the Board then extended the deadline to October, 1990. Even the new October deadline will not be met by many of these schools. Comprehensive proposals for restructuring schools involve resolution of the most difficult managerial and pedagogical issues facing urban school systems. These are issues regarding which everyone has complaints but few have coherent solutions: the role of leadership (the principal); the extent to which the classroom teacher should be directly involved in policy making or ratification, as opposed to involvement through representatives; disciplinary policies; grouping policies; curricular reform; parent involvement; retention; use of discretionary resources; testing and assessment policies.

Recommendation. Schools need adequate time to plan for School Based Management. Developing bold and creative educational and governance changes will normally take schools more time than was allotted for preparing the first group of School Based Management plans.

Principals' Role in Developing School Based Management Plans

A School Based Management plan should reflect the common views and have the approval of all elements of the school community. The best process is probably one where the council develops general principles to be included in a new school plan and then delegates the drafting of the plan to a smaller group. The principal, presumably possessing the broadest knowledge of both curricular and administrative issues at the school, as well as time out of the classroom which could be devoted to drafting a plan, might be expected to draft (or participate on a committee to draft) a School Based Management plan to meet the objectives of the leadership council. Then, after modification and review by the council, such a plan could be submitted to the faculty and to parents for approval.

However, this does not appear to be the way School Based Management plans are now being developed. In schools we studied, plans are being developed by teacher committees or individual teacher volunteers, with the expectation that completed plans will be submitted to principals and parents for token ratification. In some schools selected for School Based Management proposals, principals have little idea what specific proposals teacher volunteers are writing. Drafts of plans are scheduled for completion only days before parents or faculties must vote their approval, with no time allotted for discussion or input.

While principals have veto power over proposed School Based Management plans, some principals hesitate to assert their vision or authority when they don't feel support from Region and District superiors. When the District does not promote a positive model of the proper role of principal as instructional leader, principals are likely to be more passive in the development of School Based Management plans than the Board intended when the UTLA contract was negotiated.

Recommendation. Principals should be more active in developing School Based Management plans. Student outcomes are most likely to improve if the principal articulates a vision of school success and mobilizes other members of the school community to achieve it. Teachers should have leadership roles in planning for School Based Management but principals must not be mere passive spectators in plan development.

Allocating Teacher Time for Writing School Based Management Plans

Writing a School Based Management plan is a big job which requires a lot of time. Yet teachers responsible for such proposal writing have been expected to carry out this task while teaching full loads, with no time released from regular duties. These teachers have been conscientiously developing such proposals in the evening and on weekends, but we believe that it undervalues the importance of the issues to be resolved in urban school restructuring to expect that these issues can be thought through, particularly in those cases where the responsible teachers have never before had such overall responsibility, in a few months of volunteer time.

The likely result is that schools will either fail to meet the October deadline as they failed to meet the June deadline, or that School Based Management proposals will involve only a few superficial or incremental changes in the present school structure, rather than a new vision of an urban school.

Recommendation. If a teacher is charged with primary responsibility for drafting a School Based Management proposal, that teacher should be relieved of teaching (or other regular) responsibilities for a period of time necessary for such work, and substitute time should be authorized for that teacher's replacement. (In Dade County, schools were given a flat $6,000 planning grant for developing School Based Management proposals.) The District should also provide consultants and written background materials to the drafters, in greater intensity and detail than was begun at the USC training session on May 18-19.

The Need for Leadership Stability

Teachers at some schools we studied believe that their principal will soon be reassigned or promoted. This expectation is based on a belief that frequent rotation of principals has been District practice. Some teachers also believe that the District does not highly value the role of principal and that the most ambitious incumbents see it only as a stepping-stone to administrative jobs downtown. This expectation of instability undermined some principals' credibility as participants in planning for School Based Management.

The transfer, promotion or retirement of a principal in a school new to School Based Management could be destructive, because a new principal would not have the knowledge and memory of the school's particular history to be an effective participant in a collegial leadership group where the principal was the only person bringing to the group a school-wide and administrative perspective.

Recommendation. The District should be hesitant to transfer principals from schools which are applying for School Based Management. Approvals of applications from schools should encourage the principal to commit not to request transfer or promotion for a defined time period (say, for example, three years).

What District Policies Should Be Waived for All Schools?

The restructuring which LAUSD is undertaking involves two distinct elements: Shared Decision Making, or **how** decisions are made at the local school; and School Based Management, or **which** decisions are made at the local school. *Shared Decision Making* consists of sharing the principal's existing authority, as previously defined and limited by the District's Regional and Central administrative structures. This was the program carried out in all schools in 1989-90.

As part of the *School Based Management* application process, the school community (parents, teachers and administrator) is encouraged to consider seeking a waiver of District or State imposed policy restrictions, so that **more** decisions are made at the local school site than was previously the case.

In other words, the two reforms, Shared Decision Making and School Based Management, can be carried out independently. It is not necessary to condition increased school autonomy on the development of a principal-teacher-parent consensus. The Board could fruitfully examine whether LAUSD is excessively centralized and could decentralize additional decisionmaking authority to the local school site, even if the school site community has not yet developed a full School Based Management plan.

For example, principals complain about a variety of administrative restrictions on their ability to run schools -- the requirement to purchase products and services centrally which could be purchased at less cost locally; a prohibition on hiring community residents to do maintenance and cleaning (for example, graffiti removal) at the schools; etc.[14]

Recommendation. In granting or applying for waivers to carry out School Based Management plans, the Board could direct the Superintendent to consider in each case whether such waiver involves a practice which is unique to a particular School Based Management proposal, or whether the waiver should be extended to all schools. In schools which are not yet ready for School Based Management, benefits of decentralization might still be gained.

The Board could also direct the Superintendent to eliminate restrictive policies even where local schools have not yet requested waivers. Centralized purchasing is one example of a policy which has been loosened. As different examples, should central authority make policy regarding how often teachers can go to conferences or how often they should write comments on student report cards? Such policies could perhaps be loosened for all schools.

What District Policies Should Not Be Waived?

The Board of Education is committed to give schools more control over local decisions. This will require the Board to relax some policies which it has adopted in the past. However, there is undoubtedly a core of LAUSD policies which cannot or should not be waived. The nature of this core will probably become clearer as the District gains experience with School Based Management. For example, in adopting a process for School Based Management requests, the Board included in its application form and subsequent decisions the following guidelines:

* that schools have a philosophy or vision statement based on a needs assessment;
* that schools have a specific plan for raising student achievement;
* that schools incorporate multi-cultural, multi-linguistic strategies;
* that schools plan to provide for traveling students' parent involvement;
* that school plans be cost effective, not requiring additional District funding; and
* that school plans have no negative impact on other schools.

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14 One of the issues we have not examined is the extent to which school site decision making is restricted not by rules which the Los Angeles Board of Education has in its power to waive, but by the State Education Code, the State Department of Education, other state requirements (like those for admission to the University of California), or the Federal Government. We propose to examine this issue at a future time.

Future plans may raise questions about whether additional or more specific guidelines may be necessary. Based on situations we observed in schools, following are three examples of issues Board members may think about in deciding where the limits should be.

Should All Students Be Entitled to Twenty Minutes for Lunch?

Current district policy requires schools to provide each child at least 20 minutes to eat lunch. Should such a policy be waived if requested by a school going into School Based Management? At what point would such a proposal be unacceptable? This issue came up at one of the schools we studied.

Initially, the school had a single lunch period which wasn't long enough to give all children at least 20 minutes to eat after going through the lunch line. The principal tried to extend the lunch period, but this would have meant a later dismissal time and the Transportation Branch couldn't accomodate this change. For this reason, the principal proposed a staggered lunch period.

Teachers on the council wanted to retain a single lunch and noon play period, out of a desire for the entire faculty to spend the lunch period together. Because of the Board's mandated policy, the principal's proposal for staggered lunches was reluctantly adopted.

If this school were to adopt a School Based Management plan and request a waiver of the District's 20-minute lunch policy so it could return to a single lunch period, should the waiver be granted? Would the school as a whole benefit from the change enough (for example, by enabling teachers to conference during lunch) to justify reducing eating time for some students? At what point would such a proposal be unacceptable to the Board?

Homogeneous vs. Heterogeneous Grouping

The District does not have an official policy on student ability grouping or tracking. The practice is discouraged, but tolerated; discouraged because of a belief that tracking harms the academic development of students in the lower tracks; and tolerated because of pressure from parents of higher achieving students, because teachers have not generally been trained in methods needed for success in teaching more heterogeneous classes, and perhaps because of a belief that smaller class sizes would be necessary if heterogeneous instruction were implemented.

There are widespread philosophical differences among teachers and principals with respect to the amount of student grouping and tracking which is appropriate at the present time. On

the whole, principals in schools we surveyed, interpreting what they believe to be District preference, tended to favor more heterogeneous grouping practices.[15] Teachers, on the other hand, tended to prefer more homogeneous classes.[16]

Increased teacher decision making authority over this aspect of scheduling will likely affect District practice in grouping students. For example, school leadership councils could decide on greater separation of remedial students from regular classes, or leadership councils could choose more rotation of teaching assignments between "good" and remedial classes.

In one high school we studied, the principal's prior practice and philosophy was to assign those he considered his "best" teachers to the honors classes, believing this is the best way to improve the academic performance of the school as a whole. Teachers wanted School Based Management in order to rotate all teacher assignments to the honors and remedial classes in a department. Teachers, justifying their preference as a working condition improvement, did not give an educational rationale (arguing, for example, that remedial students could benefit as much, if not more, than honors students from the "best" teachers) although they insisted that, since all teachers were credentialed, rotation would have no negative educational effects.[17]

We suggest that student grouping and assignment of teachers to classes is an important enough policy area that the Board may wish to review how much local autonomy it wants to offer schools in these areas.

Transition from Bilingual to English Speaking Classes

At some schools we observed, interview subjects charged that the school may implement the District's bilingual master plan in a way which segregates language minority students more than is necessary. This occurs when students are kept in bilingual classes past the appropriate time period for transitioning to English-speaking classrooms -- either because of implicit financial pressure (because bilingual subsidies cease once students are transitioned) or because little distinction is made between language minority students who need remedial academic work, and those who are unready to transition to English learning.

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15 Based on our interviews, we feel that some principals who advocate more heterogeneous grouping practices don't fully appreciate the amount of teacher training and support -- for example, in team teaching techniques, coring, cooperative learning, individualized instruction, availability of aides, class size reduction -- which such a change could require.

16 This pattern was not universal, however. Some teachers we interviewed were adamant about wanting to increase heterogeneous grouping at their schools, and saw the principal as being an obstacle to this undertaking.

17 In the spring of 1990, new elections were held for teacher representatives to the leadership council at this school. The teachers most insistent on a rotation system were not re-elected, and the UTLA Chapter Chair and the principal were apparently able to sit down and mutually agree on an assignment plan for teachers for the fall 1990 semester -- in which there was some rotation but in which the qualifications, strengths and weaknesses of teachers was also taken into account.

While we are not prepared to evaluate the validity of such charges, we believe that the Board may, even in a decentralized system, wish to retain sufficient jurisdiction to monitor the master plan's implementation. Indeed, the master plan itself remains controversial. With decentralized School Based Management, some faculties may wish to experiment with an English immersion rather than a bilingual approach. The Board may have to consider whether this is a permissible degree of decentralization.[18]

Developing Decentralization Policies for the Future

The Board has already devoted considerable time and effort to developing guidelines for School Based Management. The most specific policies thus far developed are that all schools must incorporate a multi-lingual and multi-cultural approach, and that schools which receive traveling students must plan for involvement of these students' parents.

The Board approved all 27 initial School Based Management plans, without detailed discussion of the waivers requested. While the Superintendent was asked to negotiate the modification of only those plans which required additional funds or negatively impacted other schools, the Board announced that its wholesale approval of the initial 27 plans would not be a precedent for future plan approvals. The most significant waivers requested in these initial plans involved teachers and parents sitting on committees to screen and select personnel for future vacancies. It is reasonable to expect that future SBM proposals will include a broader range of waiver requests. The District will need to continue considering which waivers it can accept and which it cannot.

At the present time, we see no need to abandon a "common law" approach to developing these standards -- where the District's standards evolve in the case-by-case consideration of actual School Based Management proposals. However, for consistency to be maintained throughout this process, the Board should ask for a periodic review of waiver requests and the principles that have been used to evaluate them.

Perhaps of even greater importance, the Board has not yet begun to grapple with how it will monitor the effectiveness of schools with School Based Management. By which indices will the Board determine whether a School Based Management plan has actually fulfilled its goal of improved student educational outcomes? Will the Board attempt to evaluate the extent to which a multi-lingual and multi-cultural approach is actually implemented? How will compliance with the requirement of traveling students' parental involvement be assessed? At what point will the Board insist on the right to intervene if a school shows a record of consistently low achievement under School Based Management? To this point, the Board has only dealt with evaluating what schools *plan* to do under School Based Management, not with what these schools actually *accomplish*.

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18 Anatola Avenue, one of the 27 schools approved for School Based Management in August, may be taking steps in this direction. Its plan emphasizes ESL, rather than bilingual instruction.